

Paul L Evans
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 20



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 24, 2021

Representative Teresa Alonso Leon
House Committee on Education
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Ref: HB 2868

Chair Alonso Leon:

The COVID-19 Experience has revealed significant gaps in our ability to provide K-12 education during times of extraordinary risk. Many lessons have been learned. A few lessons have been relearned. Chief among the things we relearned is the importance of a robust academic preparation for teachers required to deliver material in creative, innovative, “new” ways.

House Bill 2868 is a simple bill. It requires people teaching collegiate-level curriculum have the credentials to do so. The bill is based upon what has long been a standard requirement among community colleges (27 credits of study above the baccalaureate level to teach college coursework). Truth be told, many community colleges actually require a master’s degree to teach. And until a few years ago, most K-12 teachers were required to have a master’s degree (in teaching K-12 subject materials) to be qualified for employment.

Over the past decade, there has been a rush toward providing K-12 students with collegiate-level courses before high school graduation. Some of that work has resulted in advantages for students. However, many of the existing programs have far more to do with financially strapped school districts with an ability to “offer” course alternatives than with providing quality collegiate level learning. Some programs depend upon coaches at the college and university level for course delivery – from K-12 teachers already overwhelmed with the rigors of the modern classroom – without significant mastery of subject matter beyond high school curricula.

When a student is awarded college credit for work, it must be consistent with accreditation expectations. In cases where a student has been granted credit but is required to retake a course because of a lack of subject mastery, financial aid programming will not pay for it. This is a critical but often camouflaged truth. I believe we must remember the basics. Let us focus our K-12 teachers on improving the K-12 outcomes and demand academic preparation from all who seek to offer collegiate-level courses. This is especially important during a time of “distance learning” when we need so much more from each, every teacher in establishing a positive learning environment.

In conclusion, I ask you to push aside the “popular” will to offer credits taught by people without the appropriate preparation for delivery. Expediency is not a justification or a rationale for providing anything less than excellence in the classroom.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul L. Evans".